

## A Typical Saturday Morning by theamiableanachronism

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**Summary:**

In which the kids have a peaceful Saturday morning watching cartoons together.

## A Typical Saturday Morning

On a Friday night in the spring of 1985, after a grueling campaign of Dungeons and Dragons, Dustin, Lucas, Will, and El all stayed the night at Mike's house. El slept in the fort that Mike always left up for her, Mike just outside of it in a sleeping bag, while the others were scattered around the basement floor in the sleeping bags that they'd started leaving there in the basement because they stayed over so often. As usual, Mike and El took longer to fall asleep, at least until they each grabbed the other's hand and peacefully drifted off.

The next morning came quickly and as usual, Dustin appointed himself the official alarm clock of the group and violently shook each of the three boys awake.

"Okay fine, sleep," he whispered loudly, narrowly dodging Lucas' swinging fist as they all groaned. "I'm going upstairs to catch Super Friends." Lucas and Will rolled, grumbling, out of their sleeping bags and trudged upstairs after him, but Mike stayed behind, taking a few extra moments to gently shake El awake.

"Hey El, the guys are going upstairs to watch cartoons. You want to come?" Still half-asleep, she frowned, confused.

"Come on, it'll be fun," he whispered patiently, smiling at the look on her face that said she doubted anything could be more fun than going back to sleep. But after a moment, she nodded, took his hand, and followed him upstairs.

When they reached the living room, Dustin and Lucas were already embroiled in a battle over the remote control.

"A few minutes ago you wanted to go back to sleep!" Dustin shouted, trying to pry Lucas' hands off the remote.

"Well, I'm up now!" Lucas growled back, pulling the remote away and taking Dustin, who wasn't letting go without a fight, with it. "If you have the remote, all we'll be watching is Muppet Babies!"

"What?! Yeah, right!" Dustin scoffed. He turned to Mike. "MIKE! It's your house! Who gets the remote?"

"I don't care, just shut up and stop fighting! You'll wake up my parents!"

The struggle paused for a moment and Will took the opportunity to jump up from the recliner and grab the remote with a triumphant laugh. Dustin and Lucas glared at each other before finally sitting down next to each other in front of the TV set.

“Muppet Babies”? Really? What the heck, man?” Dustin whispered to Lucas, who threw his hands up in an exasperated shrug.

Mike rolled his eyes and sat down next to El on the couch. They were all used to Saturday mornings like this.

Will turned on the television set. The theme from “Super Friends” had already started to play and as always, El was riveted. The first time she’d watched with the boys, the music and bright colors had been jarring, but now it was exciting, especially as the characters that jumped and flew across the screen were becoming more and more familiar to her. The boys all grinned at her when the announcer boomed, “The Legendary SUPER POWERS Show!” She shyly returned a smile and curled her legs up under her. They still called her their “superhero” and it made her smile.

After the first hour, Dustin stood up and walked to the kitchen. “You guys hungry?” he called over his shoulder. “Hellooo?” The only response he got was Mike jumping up from the couch as if he’d been shocked and whispering a hurried “I’ll be right back” before running into the kitchen and sliding to a stop on sock feet next to Dustin.

“Wow, you must be pretty hungry,” Dustin laughed, opening the fridge.

“I’m not, I just - almost forgot – something. . .” he faltered.

“Okay,” Dustin shrugged. “Hey, there’s some chicken from last night in here. How about that?”

“I don’t care, can you just move already?” Mike said, bouncing from one foot to the other, obviously in a big rush.

“Okay, okay, geez, Mike! Sorry!” He shook his head and shut the fridge, walking back into the living room with the bowl of chicken, passing it around before he sat back down.

Mike came back a few minutes later with a plate of Eggos, which he very casually handed to El with a quick, “Here you go,” before sitting down and paying very close attention to the show, his ears pink.

“D’awwwwww,” Lucas teased. A glare from Mike didn’t let him say anything else, although he and the other two grinned knowingly at each other.

“Thank you, Mike,” El said quietly.

“Oh. Sure.” Mike shrugged, trying to be nonchalant but failing miserably once she smiled at him.

After a few hours, Karen Wheeler came downstairs with a sleepy Holly, followed closely by her husband, Ted, who made a beeline for the fridge. He opened it, but then paused, staring into it. He turned to

his wife and opened his mouth as if to say something, looked back into the fridge, then turned back to her again. Finally, he scoffed out an “Eh,” closed the fridge, and dejectedly grabbed an apple before retreating behind his newspaper at the dining room table.

Karen rolled her eyes and had to stifle a laugh when she recognized the empty bowl in Dustin’s lap that had been full of chicken when she put it in the fridge last night. Aha.

Seeing all five of the kids together again warmed her heart, and she smiled fondly as she noticed each of them starting to nod off. The events of a little over a year ago were still hard for her to wrap her head around: government conspiracies, faked deaths, monsters? That last part especially was mind-boggling. But what stood out in her memory the most was how helpless and heartbroken she had felt when Mike held onto her as if for dear life the night they had all found out that Will was “dead” or when Mike had sobbed as if his own heart had broken into a million pieces the night the little girl now sitting next to him on their couch had disappeared. Knowing that those government men were responsible for her son’s pain both times made her blood boil, but there was nothing she could do about that now, although if she ever got her hands on any of those government “officials” again. . . Well. All that mattered now was that all of them were safe and together again. To be honest, she didn’t *want* to know all the details of what happened to Will or even the little girl whose name was a number. “We call her El, for short,” Mike had told her, giddy with excitement and relief, when she had come back only a few months ago in the fall of 1984. Now she was living with the Byers, but she was here just as much as there, taking every opportunity she could to see Mike. It didn’t surprise Karen at all; Mike was awfully protective of El and was always so lovingly gentle with her, as if she were made of glass. It was obvious the both of them cared about each other, even though they were both so young. She could see it in the way they looked at each other and smiled and were always reluctant to leave each other’s side. Even now, looking into the living room, she could see that they had fallen asleep, El with her head on Mike’s shoulder and his head gently resting on top of hers. She felt her eyes tear up, her heart swelling in her chest.

She shook her head and sighed. She poured Holly and herself some orange juice and started preparing breakfast. She was just glad she didn’t have to see Mike waking up every morning with dark circles and red-rimmed eyes anymore. If she never had to see that again,

she'd be one happy mother.

Back in the living room, Dustin yawned and dragged his eyes away from the screen. Suddenly, he slapped Lucas in the arm and Will in the leg, both of whom frowned and glared at him before realizing he was raising his eyebrows and grinning his signature grin at Mike and El asleep on the couch. They all covered their mouths to muffle their laughter before mouthing huge, exaggerated "AWWW"s at each other. They all knew how Mike and El felt about each other. They weren't stupid. They were just glad Mike was happy again and especially glad that El was back home and safe. They'd all missed her, even Will, once they'd told him about her. He'd only seen her once, when he was in the Upside Down, and he couldn't remember her very clearly. Not that he wanted to remember anything about that place very clearly. But once he'd met her, it was as if they'd been friends their whole lives. She was one of them now. They only teased Mike because they got such a kick out of watching their Dungeon Master turn the color of a fire engine. It never bothered El.

Will let an audible snicker slip out and clapped his hand back over his mouth, wide-eyed as El stirred. The combination of El's movement and Dustin and Lucas' badly-contained snickering at Will's panic woke Mike. Lucas caught his eye and sighed dramatically, fluttering his eyelashes and clasping both hands over his heart before collapsing into laughter.

"Shut up, Lucas," Mike hissed, blushing profusely. "You'll wake El up!" He looked over at her and sighed in relief to see that she was still asleep, looking extremely peaceful. She smiled in her sleep and his stomach flipped over. He waited until the others had gone back to watching the television before allowing himself to smile bashfully, his face still warm. He stayed as still as possible, not wanting to wake her up, or worse, make her take her head off his shoulder and move away. It was probably stupid, but he felt better just having her next to him. Even with the guys teasing him, he felt happier than he had in a really long time. Because El was here. And she was okay. She was ALIVE. And here watching dorky cartoons with all of them.

When he'd first seen her in November at the Byers' house, he hadn't known whether to laugh or cry or what so he'd just run to her and hugged her as tight as he could. It had only been a year, but it had felt like forever. He'd wondered if she would even remember him at all or. . . if she would even feel the same way he did about her. But she'd hugged him just as tightly and whispered, "Mike, I missed you."

It made him feel like someone had hit him on the back of the head and he'd been so lightheaded, he was still surprised he'd been able to say anything. But he did say something: "I missed you too, El."

When they pulled away, he saw that she'd been crying. With a start, he'd realized his own eyes were wet too. They'd both laughed shakily, realizing that everyone was watching them: Dustin, Lucas, Will, Chief Hopper, Jonathon, Will's mom. . . and she was crying too. It had been almost five months since then and every time he saw El, he felt just as happy to see her, maybe even more because it reminded him that it wasn't one of his dreams: *she really was here*.

El started to move and opened her eyes, looking up at Mike.

"Sorry, El, did I wake you up?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I wasn't asleep."

"Oh." A grin spread across his face and his stomach did another backflip. "Oh, okay."

And she didn't move her head from off his shoulder.